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ABSTRACT

The past decade has been a time of grim realization of the shortcomings of education and especially its resistance to internal reform, resulting in the erosion of the confidence of the people. Marland called his embryonic concept of reform career education, and it had as its birthplace the community junior college which denied the need to dichotomize education into academic and occupational components. Focusing on practicality and relevance as well as abstract knowledge, career education commits itself thematically to credibility, accountability and flexibility. It includes the entire range of learning experience from childhood through maturity, and is not limited to formal education. Career education should free Americans by preparing them to make intelligent career choices and to prepare for life in the broadest possible sense, via intrinsic motivation. The role of the two-year colleges in providing opportunities to millions of Americans is praised. The author's hope is for the achievement of a partnership of learner and institution as a vital, humane, effective instrument for individual and community betterment. (KS)

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LIFE, WORK, AND THE CAREER EDUCATION CONCEPT*

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This is my first opportunity after more than a year in office to meet with the leadership of the community junior colleges but not, I hope, my last. My credentials in the two-year college system are limited to service as a charter member of the Board of the Allegheny County college system in the Pittsburgh area, but during the years that I helped to govern that system I came to hold a deep and abiding respect for your institutions as the newest star in the education galaxy and a particularly potent force for the accomplishment of the current movement toward a meaningful and effective system of career education.

It was some time ago --- in what may prove to have been a creative moment in my career as Commissioner of Education --- that I advanced the notion that the country needed a new concept of elementary, secondary and postsecondary education, an animating principle around which could be organized more effective, more appropriate, and certainly more relevant learning systems to meet the present and the developing needs of American young people and the Nation itself.

It called for no extraordinary wisdom to realize that something had to be done. The situation was too clear and too

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alarming to deny the need for action. The past decade has been a time of somewhat grim realization of the shortcomings of education and particularly its amply demonstrated resistance to internal reform. We increasingly understand just how difficult it is to improve our ability to teach minimal literacy to poor children, to be an equalizing, integrating influence on the divided classes and races of Americans. Certainly it was no secret that the schools were failing to interest and motivate massive numbers of students and were unable to hold them once they could legally get away. The schools were asked to fulfill the dream of truly equal opportunity --- for work, for knowledge, for physical health, for mental health. For a very large proportion of our people, it was clear that education had been effective and good. But for perhaps 20 percent or more --- an ominously growing percentage --- it was failing. And surely it was clear that the one essential ingredient for success of any public enterprise but most particularly for public education --- the confidence of the people --- had seriously eroded.

I called the embryonic concept career education, not a new term, of course, but one that seemed especially relevant to our time and to the reform purpose because of all the problems and failings of modern education the most devastating

has been its failure to prepare students to enter a career, a failure in which the community junior colleges certainly cannot be included. For if there was a birthplace of the career education concept, it was very likely in the two-year colleges. You led the universe of education in saying that education did not necessarily have to be dichotomized into the academic and the occupational. You knew the truth and the simplicity of this formulation. But few others did.

Boring young people throughout nine months of the year at elementary and secondary or postsecondary levels is wasteful. It is also impolite. But launching them into the world after 10 or 12 or 16 years unprepared for future study or for gainful employment is inexcusable. The very least the people expect of education is that it should equip the student to get a useful and self-respecting job of some kind. But for how many millions has education proved to be of meager if any assistance in the central reason for being --- fulfilling a life in all respects? Our failure as educators to meet this minimum requirement has left our credibility in tatters with much of our clientele, and, I am afraid, rightly so.

It is our belief that the career education theme will help the reform movement focus on practicality and relevance as well as abstract knowledge, causing us to initiate and carry through a searching examination of the percepts

underlying typical elementary and secondary and, to a certain extent, higher education curricula. In launching this proposition we intended to establish a new accountability, a new credibility, weighing as objectively as possible just how well we are keeping pace with the radically changing demands, expectations, and preferences of contemporary society. It was my belief that such review would reveal that much of the lethargy and discontent within the schools stemmed from a generalized belief, particularly among the minorities and disadvantaged but certainly not limited to them, that school simply wasn't useful. The idea behind career education is to make it of some use, and thereby to establish an intrinsic motivation not now present in elementary and secondary schools for many of our young.

All that was well over a year ago, and much has transpired since. The response to career education that has developed in these ensuing months has been for the most part gratifyingly favorable. The idea seems to have struck a strong chord of response in America, and words of support have come from all quarters --- teachers, administrators, parents, labor, business, legislators, and students. There is abroad in this country a very strong feeling, parallel to my own, that if education is to serve its purpose properly it must mesh with the day-to-day affairs of the world. The

people obviously want education to be close to them again --- close to their community life, and close to their career needs, an idea which strongly motivates your institutions.

But as you might expect not all reaction to career education has been supportive. Critics have arisen to challenge the idea, some to question its intent as anti-intellectual: is my purpose, they ask, to convert our free and inquiring schools into mills producing skilled obedient cogs for the industrial machine? Am I proposing to abandon the traditional humane and liberalizing aspects of education that have enriched the mind of western man for many centuries? Is career education merely a thinly disguised scheme for forcing certain segments of our youth, notably the minorities and disadvantaged, into preparation for jobs that may be necessary for the functioning of American business and government but have little else to recommend them, particularly for their personal satisfaction and fulfillment as workers and, moreover, as human beings?

Such questions raise very basic issues and we are giving them our most careful consideration as we continue to shape the career education concept. I would like to take this little time today to discuss some of them with you, for I think it is important that the people of this Nation understand

what President Nixon had in mind when he referred to career education in his State of the Union message on January 20 as a "major new emphasis" that would make education more effective for our young and more productive for our country. And I think it is particularly important that career education be clearly understood and, hopefully, warmly supported by this audience because so much of the success of the movement will depend upon the commitment of the leadership of community and junior colleges to both their liberal arts and their occupational objectives.

Some of the things you should be thinking about are: (1) how to reach more affirmatively to the secondary schools in articulating career continuums; (2) how to dissolve the disparities in our value system which exalt the A.B. degree and diminish the skilled artisan; (3) how to remove from the State level of governance the dichotomy between occupational education and academic education; (4) how to influence the guidance counselors at high school level toward the path of career education.

All forms of two-year institutions -- the comprehensive community colleges, the private junior colleges, the lower divisions of major universities, the technical institutes -- all have shown extraordinary capacity to prepare students for successful careers, as well as for continued study toward the bachelor's degree. But, of course, you have done for more than

simply serve the occupational interests of this Nation. Within a remarkably short time, you have become as the New York Times put it recently, "a major social force that is shaping industrial development, urban services, and personal pride." And I would add to that list that I personally regard your institutions as the cutting edge of the new reality in education --- education that is not restricted to detached and academic clinical examination of social problems, but is deeply involved in their solution.

Career education would build upon this lively tradition of service to students and service to communities, moving your comprehensive model in both directions --- four-year institutions and high schools. Career education involves instruction in both the academic and occupational fields, and emphasizes, as you have taught us, the concept of lifelong learning --- for continuing education clearly will be education's principal growth area through the 70's. We have a lot of catching up to do.

Career education is intended to extend the idea of individual growth and of service to include the entire range of learning experience, from childhood through maturity, not limited to formal education but including the acquisition and use of knowledge at work and in the home as well as in the classroom. Research and development activities now underway at the Office of Education are directed at all three settings,

though primary emphasis at the beginning is being placed on the classroom as we know it today.

Some of the criticism of career education I have invited on myself on the theory that it is better to seek out honest intellectual differences at the start than to sail ahead as if the waters contained no hidden shoals. A few weeks ago I invited some of the finest intellects in the scholarly disciplines, together with a few practitioners and young people, to serve on an Ad Hoc Panel on Career Education. The purpose of this group was to appraise the basic tenets as they were developing in the Office of Education and through observations, questionings, and fertile cross-examination to contribute generally to the growth and development of the skeletal idea. It not our purpose to defend the embryonic notion, but to attack it with the sharpest wisdom and experience we could assemble.

The panel members have more than justified my faith: they have been brutally frank, raising issues loudly and bluntly and in the process definitely putting us in OE on our mettle. It is significant, I feel, that after examining all of our published material and interrogating us for a full day, they gave a qualified but generally affirmative endorsement.

One questioned, for example, the propriety of emphasizing the career-preparation aspects of education. "Should the schools," he asked, "prepare students to become docile members of the capitalist machine? Are we concerned with the realism of the job market or with providing opportunity for enhancing the quality of life?" The youth culture in some of its parts seems to be unimpressed by economic security as a motivation. I offer to meet such questioners on their own ground. If, indeed, they are motivated to serve others, they can do it better with skills and tools and know-how than with endless conversational rhetoric.

Another commented that "changing the label of vocational education to career education won't change its poor image. The aspirations of minority members for a higher education will prompt them to view career education as a way of keeping them out of college." This is a serious issue and one that will demand the best of our efforts.

I have not recited these quotes to you as a speech-making ploy, setting up straw men which I will now attempt deftly to knock down. Such issues are not easy to knock down. Such questions are not easy to answer. But it is clearly evident that they must be answered if the reform movement in American education is to move forward. They must be answered if the reform spirit which is so lively and pervasive in the whole of American education today is to sustain itself and enable us finally to correct the inequities and inefficiencies that

disfigure so much of education. Why career education as the center of our reform? As Commissioner of Education, with certain powers and influences, and the resources of a nation of scholars and practitioners on which to draw, I simply know of no better way. One thing we must be sure --- that career education is not misconstrued as a way of suppressing the striving of minorities toward the liberal arts degree. Career education is meant for all, including the many white and favored young people for whom the bachelor's degree has become a folkway without usefulness or meaning beyond the aspirations of parents and neighbors.

The purpose of career education is not to classify pricelessly individual human beings in the alphas, betas, and gammas of Huxley's "Brave New World," minds perniciously conditioned to accept predetermined roles in society. The truth of the matter lies at the other end of the spectrum of choice. Our purpose is to free Americans by preparing them to make intelligent career choices from the entire range of options, including the liberal arts degree for those who want it as well as the respectable skill or craft for those who want it. Our intent is to have education prepare the citizens of this country for life in the broadest possible sense, so they go forth with their eyes open and their options open to all possibilities for the most satisfactory experiences in employment, education, politics, family life, environmental

progress, and cultural fulfillment.

And yet while career education as we presently see it can in no sense be considered a placing of limits on individual aspirations and expectations, or the favoring of a technical and skills-oriented curriculum over a liberal arts-academic curriculum, neither is it a shapeless bromide offering nothing more specific than a vague hope of future deliverance by simply being in school or college. It must and does have a focus and a starting place. Its focus is self-determination toward real goals, intrinsically motivated. Its direction is toward useful, prideful, and satisfying employment and its starting place is in the high school where we frequently find education at its most futile, and where we often see so many sad young people nearing the end of their formal schooling and yet for all their years in the classroom hardly ready for the plunge into the reality of the workaday world. I think it stands to reason that these young people and the tens of thousands who come crowding after them should no longer be conditioned, confused, and frustrated by the hallowed and ancient distinction between occupational and academic education that some find so compelling. Whatever the blend of curriculum and instructional techniques that it takes to start them out on the right foot is what they want, and what we believe career education can give them.

We must look now to purposes and goals as well as degrees, recognizing that true success in life lies in a fortuitous or planned combination of objectives realized, talents developed, and individual growth made possible. It is for the arrangement of informed planning by the young people themselves that I plead. This is the practical and yet the noble purpose as well of the community junior college, where academic students and technical students learn side by side under the most democratic, supportive concept of education there is, moving about amidst their opportunities with ease. As Ed Gleazer has said so well, the job of the community junior college "is to do what other institutions will not or cannot do." And you do have a very special mission in pursuing your unique tradition --- the job of bringing educational opportunity to those who need it the most and from all past practice could expect it the least. Community junior colleges are many things, but perhaps most of all they are the leading vehicles of the rising expectations of a very demanding group of people.

You have done more than open the door of opportunity, you have raised a floodgate: by 1975 the present enrollment of 2.5 million people in two-year institutions will swell to anywhere from 3,300,000 to as much as 5 million, depending upon whose forecast you read. Dr. Joseph Cosand, OE's new Deputy Commissioner for Higher Education, a man deeply

involved for many years in the community college movement, and Marie Martin, director of our Office of Community Colleges, have fervently sought to impress upon me the impact of these growth figures for the purposes of evaluating existing Federal policy and the Office of Education's supporting role. They point out that two-year institutions enroll at least 35 percent of the first-time college students (and in California and Florida up to 80 percent) and make a strong case for expanding the percentage of Federal funds you receive so that you may carry out your complex mission in education with even greater effectiveness. I can assure you that matter is receiving our earnest attention as we plan the deployment of higher education funds for Fiscal Year 1973.

For it is clearly evident that community junior colleges, in addition to being the liveliest phenomenon in American education, are also in perhaps the most difficult as well as the most promising position in education. Unfettered by custom and ossified protocol, you are the most viable and fluid of all our levels of education in America. No other institutions have become the focus of so much hope where little existed before; and no other institutions will be so swiftly called to account if those aroused expectations are not fulfilled. Your students seek and you are endeavoring to give them a sound blend of occupational and academic learning as preparation for life and for personal economic

effectiveness. They seek a foundation for personal success --- whatever their definitions of success might be. But that is their business.

Indeed, the elemental purpose of career education would be to impart a readiness for living fruitfully in a civilized environment, and this, as British historian Kenneth Clark has said, "requries a modicum of material prosperity --- enough to provide a little leisure. But, far more," he continues, "it requires confidence --- confidence in the society in which one lives, belief in its philosophy, belief in its laws, and confidence in one's own mental powers."

No other postsecondary institutions can bring to the career education movement the same spirit of innovation that public and private junior colleges and community colleges possess and the same freedom to practice it. Most of your institutions are young enough not to be caught up in the inhibiting and generally useless "traditions" that block needed change, either in your organization, your staffing, or your program development. You can serve more adventurously than other institutions as centers for experimenting with the new approaches and new initiatives that career education will require. For this reason I would suggest that the proposed National Foundation for Postsecondary Education, included in the Senate version of the omnibus higher education bill now before Congress, will be especially useful to you. The

Foundation will have in its first year $100 million in risk capital for the exploration and development of new methods of postsecondary teaching and learning, enabling you to mobilize your thinking for tomorrow. The Foundation will place a premium on institutional reform and give in return freedom from the usual restrictive, suffocating guidelines that are the killing price of so many Federal grants. I believe that the Foundation will be a rich companion piece to career education at the postsecondary level --- important for the institutions, important for the students, important for the cultural and economic life of the nation. And perhaps most important from your point of view, the Foundation will be truly your creation, given form and substance by your initiatives, succeeding as an innovative force in higher education --- as we surely hope and believe it will --- through your efforts, not those of a Federal agency. I think that cooperative arrangement succinctly defines the new Federalism that is guiding Washington policy today.

I sense in this gathering, to sum up my feelings, an atmosphere of vision, motion, and excitement and a seeking after the future --- with perhaps a touch of uncertainty thrown in. That would also describe the exact condition of career education, and the National Foundation. Both are in essence staking out new and tentative claims in education. Both are yet in the process of defining their roles, still meeting

criticism, still responding to suggestions. But however these concepts may change in the time to come, what must remain is the conviction that has so admirably animated your institutions and that forms the heart of career education and the National Foundation --- the belief that education must serve the people of America where they are, in ways that they require, and for intellectual and utilitarian ends and purposes as defined by the people themselves.

For however professional and institutionalized we may become, the humble truth is that we have and always shall have a full partner in our learning enterprise --- the learner. My judgement is that your institutions have made of this partnership a more vital, humane, and effective instrument for individual and community betterment than education has previously invented.

Yours is the leading edge of educational reform at this time in history. In my post in Government I want to join you in that exciting theater of social change, and lend what energy I can to what is clearly the most lively and responsive component in the education spectrum today.

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